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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/61/443/Add.2 and Corr.1)*]

61/161. Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981, by which it proclaimed the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,

Recalling also article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[1] article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[2] and other relevant human rights provisions,

Reaffirming the call of the World Conference on Human Rights upon all Governments to take all appropriate measures in compliance with their international obligations and with due regard to their respective legal systems to counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, including practices of discrimination against women and the desecration of religious sites, recognizing that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion,[3]

Reaffirming also the recognition by the World Conference on Human Rights that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 56/6 of 9 November 2001 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, in which the Assembly recognized the valuable contribution that dialogue among civilizations could make to an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

Acknowledging that in order to be effective, such a dialogue should be based on respect for the dignity of adherents of religions and beliefs, as well as respect for diversity and the universal promotion and protection of human rights,

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[1] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[2] Resolution 217 A (III).

[3] See A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III, sect. II, para. 22.

Considering that religion or belief, for those who profess either, is one of the fundamental elements in their conception of life and that freedom of religion or belief should be fully respected and guaranteed,

Considering also that the disregard for and infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, have brought, directly or indirectly, wars and great suffering to humankind,

Recognizing the importance of promoting dialogue among civilizations in order to enhance mutual understanding and knowledge among different social groups, cultures and civilizations in various areas, including culture, religion, education, information, science and technology, and in order to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recalling Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/40 of 19 April 2005 on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief,[4]

Seriously concerned at all attacks upon religious places, sites and shrines, including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments,

Seriously concerned also at the misuse of registration procedures as a means to limit the right to freedom of religion or belief of members of certain religious communities and at the limitations placed on religious publications,

Recognizing the important work carried out by the Human Rights Committee in providing guidance with respect to the scope of the freedom of religion or belief,

Convinced of the need to address, for instance, in the context of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations[5] and the Alliance of Civilizations the rise in all parts of the world of religious extremism affecting the rights of individuals and groups based on religion or belief, the situations of violence and discrimination that affect many women as a result of religion or belief and the abuse of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant instruments of the United Nations,

Resolved to adopt all necessary and appropriate measures for the speedy elimination of such intolerance based on religion or belief in all its forms and manifestations and prevent and combat discrimination based on religion or belief,

Noting that a formal or legal distinction at the national level between different kinds of religions or faith-based communities may, in some cases, constitute discrimination and may impinge on the enjoyment of the freedom of religion or belief,

Underlining the importance of education in the promotion of tolerance, which involves the acceptance by the public of, and its respect for, diversity, including with regard to religious expressions, and underlining also the fact that education, in particular at school, should contribute in a meaningful way to promoting tolerance and the elimination of discrimination based on religion or belief,

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[4] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 3* and corrigendum (E/2005/23 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. A.

[5] See resolution 56/6.

Recalling the importance of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, held in Madrid from 23 to 25 November 2001, and continuing to invite Governments to give consideration to the Final Document adopted at the Conference,[6]

Emphasizing that States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance, respect and freedom of religion or belief,

Recognizing the importance of interreligious and intrareligious dialogue and the role of religious and other non-governmental organizations in promoting tolerance in matters relating to religion or belief,

Believing that further intensified efforts are therefore required to promote and protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and to eliminate all forms of hatred, intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, as also noted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,

1. *Welcomes* the work and the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on freedom of religion or belief;[7]

2. *Condemns* all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief;

3. *Encourages* the efforts made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to coordinate in the field of human rights the activities of relevant United Nations organs, bodies and mechanisms dealing with all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief;

4. *Urges* States:

(*a*) To ensure that their constitutional and legislative systems provide adequate and effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief to all without distinction, inter alia, by the provision of effective remedies in cases where the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, or the right to practise freely one's religion, including the right to change one's religion or belief, is violated;

(*b*) To exert the utmost efforts, in accordance with their national legislation and in conformity with international human rights law, to ensure that religious places, sites, shrines and symbols are fully respected and protected and to take additional measures in cases where they are vulnerable to desecration or destruction;

(*c*) To review, whenever relevant, existing registration practices in order to ensure the right of all persons to manifest their religion or belief, alone or in community with others and in public or in private;

(*d*) To ensure, in particular, the right of all persons to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief and to establish and maintain places for these purposes and the right of all persons to write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas;

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[6] E/CN.4/2002/73, appendix.

[7] See A/61/340.

(*e*) To ensure that, in accordance with appropriate national legislation and in conformity with international human rights law, the freedom of all persons and members of groups to establish and maintain religious, charitable or humanitarian institutions is fully respected and protected;

(*f*) To ensure that no one within their jurisdiction is deprived of the right to life, liberty or security of person because of religion or belief and that no one is subjected to torture or arbitrary arrest or detention on that account and to bring to justice all perpetrators of violations of these rights;

(*g*) To ensure that all public officials and civil servants, including members of law enforcement bodies, the military and educators, in the course of their official duties, respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief, and that all necessary and appropriate education or training is provided;

5. *Recognizes with deep concern* the overall rise in instances of intolerance and violence directed against members of many religious and other communities in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia;

6. *Expresses concern* over the persistence of institutionalized social intolerance and discrimination practised against many in the name of religion or belief;

7. *Condemns* any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audio-visual and electronic media or any other means;

8. *Stresses* the need to strengthen dialogue, inter alia, through the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations[5] and the Alliance of Civilizations;

9. *Invites* States, the Special Rapporteur, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other relevant entities of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and other international and regional organizations and civil society to consider promoting dialogue among civilizations in order to contribute to the elimination of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, inter alia, by addressing the following issues within the framework of international standards of human rights:

(*a*) The rise of religious extremism affecting religions in all parts of the world;

(*b*) The situations of violence and discrimination that affect many women as a result of religion or belief;

(*c*) The use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant instruments of the United Nations;

10. *Urges* States to step up their efforts to eliminate intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, notably by:

(*a*) Taking all necessary and appropriate action, in conformity with international standards of human rights, to combat hatred, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by intolerance based on religion or belief, as well as incitement to hostility and violence, with particular regard to religious minorities, and devoting particular attention to practices that violate the human rights of women and discriminate against women, including in the exercise of their right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief;

(*b*) Promoting and encouraging, through education and other means, understanding, tolerance and respect in all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief;

(*c*) Undertaking all appropriate efforts to encourage those engaged in teaching to cultivate respect for all religions or beliefs, thereby promoting mutual understanding and tolerance;

11. *Invites* Governments, religious bodies and civil society to continue to undertake dialogue at all levels to promote greater tolerance, respect and understanding;

12. *Emphasizes* the importance of a continued and strengthened dialogue among and within religions or beliefs, including as encompassed in the dialogue among civilizations, to promote greater tolerance, respect and mutual understanding;

13. *Also emphasizes* that equating any religion with terrorism should be avoided, as this may have adverse consequences on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief of all members of the religious communities concerned;

14. *Further emphasizes* that, as underlined by the Human Rights Committee, restrictions on the freedom to manifest religion or belief are permitted only if limitations are prescribed by law, are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and are applied in a manner that does not vitiate the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

15. *Encourages* the continuing efforts in all parts of the world of the Special Rapporteur to examine incidents and governmental actions that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief[8] and to recommend remedial measures, as appropriate;

16. *Stresses* the need for the Special Rapporteur to continue to apply a gender perspective, inter alia, through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process, including in information collection and in recommendations;

17. *Welcomes and encourages* the continuing efforts of all actors in society, including non-governmental organizations and bodies and groups based on religion or belief, to promote the implementation of the Declaration, and further encourages their work in promoting freedom of religion or belief and in highlighting cases of religious intolerance, discrimination and persecution;

18. *Recommends* that the United Nations and other actors, in their efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief, ensure the widest possible dissemination of the text of the Declaration in as many different languages as possible by United Nations information centres and by other interested bodies;

19. *Decides* to continue its consideration of measures to implement the Declaration;

[8] See resolution 36/55.

20. *Welcomes* the work of the Special Rapporteur, and urges all Governments to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and to respond favourably to her requests to visit their countries and to provide her with all necessary information so as to enable her to fulfil her mandate even more effectively;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the Special Rapporteur receives the necessary resources to enable her to discharge her mandate fully;

22. *Requests* the Special Rapporteur to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session;

23. *Decides* to consider the question of the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance at its sixty-second session under the item entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights".

81st plenary meeting
19 December 2006